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ABSTRACT

Most of Arizona's 13 state-funded school-to-work (STW) partnerships are serving out-of-school youth through existing programs within their boundaries. The programs typically fall under the jurisdiction of educational institutions, training institutions, business and labor organizations, and other organizations. The most common approach to serving youth is through partnerships with educational institutions and alternative schools in particular. The least frequently used approaches to recruiting out-of-school youth are through partnerships with business and labor organizations. Partnerships have proposed several strategies to accommodate out-of-school youth within STW systems: increase the number of joint activities between traditional and nontraditional schools; focus on work and community-based school activities; aggressively recruit out-of-school youth service providers not currently active within the partnership; and expand programs perceived as successful in engaging this population. Partnerships are using several new methods of reaching out-of-school youth: career and community resource centers with centralized career information; teams or task forces to develop ways to incorporate out-of-school youth into STW; career information kiosks; communications networks; electronic bulletin boards; central job registries; training program directories; radio spots, posters, and newspaper ads specifically targeting them; and industry-specific workshops. (YLB)

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Arizona's School To Work Solutions For Out-of-School Youth

Arizona School To Work Briefing Paper #6 *July 1997*

by Jill Engmark, Consultant

The School-to-Work (STW) Opportunities Act of 1994 is intended to "offer opportunities for ***all students*** to participate in a performance-based education and training program." Nevertheless, certain populations remain hard to reach. In particular, out-of-school youth—students aged 16 through 24 who have not completed high school and are not currently enrolled in school—pose a unique challenge for emerging STW systems.

This document explores the manner in which Arizona's 13 state-funded STW partnerships (for FY 1996-97) are serving out-of-school youth. In addition, new system elements and regional STW plans for service expansion for this population are detailed. Innovative programs within the partnerships are also highlighted.

Partners Serving Out-of-School Youth

Most of Arizona's STW partnerships are serving out-of-school youth through existing programs within their boundaries (Table 1, page 3). Types of programs serving this populations typically fall under the jurisdiction of one of the following: educational institutions, training institutions, business and labor organizations, and other organizations.

Educational Institutions

School To Work Partnerships most often try to attract out-of-school youth by providing "alternative" or non-traditional educational opportunities. Alternative schools, charter schools, special postsecondary programs, and adult education programs appeal to youth through open-entry, open-exit, accelerated credit, self-paced programs of study combining school activities with practical work experiences. Of the partnerships, 92 percent currently work with alternative schools, while 85 percent include postsecondary institutional partners. Nine out of the 13 STW partnerships are working in some capacity with charter schools within their geographic regions. Three of the partnerships reported that out-of-school youth are served via adult education programs.

Training Institutions

Private Industry Councils and/or Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) programs also target out-of-school youth. Most (11 out of 13) STW partnerships are working with local JPTA programs. In addition, three of the four Maricopa County STW partnerships utilize the Maricopa Skill Center to provide services for out-of-school youth.

Business and Labor Organizations

STW partnerships also work with unions and apprenticeship organizations. The Carpenters Union is actively involved in Pima & Santa Cruz County. The Western Maricopa STW Partnership has established a working relationship with the Western Apprenticeship Coordinators Association. Another organization—Yuma Garage Owners—has paired with the Yuma STW Partnership to create an automotive apprenticeship program.

Other Organizations

Other organizations also partner with regional STW systems to provide opportunities for out-of-school youth. Nearly 70 percent of the STW partnerships incorporate juvenile correctional programs among their partners. More than half of

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the partnerships work through Arizona Department of Economic Security programs (e.g., Job Service, America's Job Bank, One-Stop Career Centers, and Vocational Rehabilitation) or social service agencies (e.g. community mental or behavioral health organizations, wellness centers, and pregnancy and family counseling organizations).

Government (e.g., Department of Labor Youth Fair Chance in Cochise County) and community-based youth programs (e.g., Pledge-a-Job and the Youth Storefront Project in Pima & Santa Cruz Counties, and Youth in Action in Coconino and Maricopa Counties) also seek to attract out-of-school youth. In the "other" category, less frequently used are tribal government programs and those such as offered by county libraries.

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Across categories of partnering institutions and organizations, Table 1 illustrates that the most common approach to serving out-of-school youth is through partnerships with educational institutions and alternative schools in particular. The least frequently used approaches to recruiting out-of-school youth are through partnerships with business and labor organizations.

Planned Program Expansions

Partnerships have proposed several strategies to better accommodate out-of-school youth within School To Work Systems. One approach has been to increase the number of joint activities between traditional and non-traditional schools. Expanded services include Career Days or fairs, tutoring, apprenticeships/internships for non-traditional students, joint staff in-services, and sharing of computer software. Other partnerships (e.g., Pima & Santa Cruz) focus on work and community-based, rather than shared school activities, to access this difficult-to-reach population.

A third technique has been to aggressively recruit out-of-school youth service providers that are not currently active within the partnership. A final approach has been to expand programs perceived to be "successful" in engaging this population.

The following are examples of innovative programs that Arizona's School To Work Partnerships have sought to expand.

- ☆ **Villa Oasis Interscholastic Center for Education (VOICE)** is a Pinal County alternative school designed for students in grades 7-12 who have not been successful in traditional school settings.
- ☆ **Primavera Builders Program** allows students enrolled in construction classes at Pima Community College to gain apprentice experience.
- ☆ **Building Trades Apprenticeship Program** offers apprenticeship opportunities to Yuma Juvenile Court Charter School students.
- ☆ **NAU's Transition Works for Youth** (a dropout retrieval program) uses workshops, career counseling and planning, open entry/open exit educational opportunities, job shadowing, and workplace mentoring to retrieve juvenile offenders, substance abusers, pregnant or teen parents, and educationally-handicapped students back into the educational system.
- ☆ **Youthbuild**, a program funded by Northland Pioneer College and the Navajo Hopi Relocation Program, enables students to build and renovate low-cost housing, while taking academic and vocational classes.
- ☆ **Educational Talent Search Project** identifies and recruits students from low-income families to receive specialized instruction and tutoring through the Yavapai College Learning Center.
- ☆ **School-on-Site Program** in Pinal County provides students with academic and vocational instruction at their place of employment by an "on-site" teacher.
- ☆ **Seeds of Hope** offers service learning opportunities to juvenile offenders in Pinal County.

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Table 1

Current Programs/Partners that Serve Out-of-School Youth

Arizona STW Partnership	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	∫
Educational Institutions														
Charter school(s)	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	9
Alternative school(s)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	12
Postsecondary institution	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	11
Adult education program(s)	✓									✓	✓			3
Training Institutions														
JTPA/Private Industry Council	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	11
Skill center(s)				✓	✓		✓							3
Business & Labor Organizations														
Unions										✓				1
Apprenticeship program(s)					✓		✓			✓	✓			4
Other Organizations														
Arizona Department of Economic Security	✓	✓						✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		7
Juvenile corrections	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	9
Social service agencies	✓	✓			✓	✓				✓	✓	✓		7
Community-based youth program(s)		✓			✓	✓				✓				4
County library	✓													1
Government program(s)	✓			✓				✓	✓	✓				5
Tribal government(s)									✓	✓	✓			3

*Note: Information represents self-reported data from partnerships' FY 1995-96 summative reports and FY 1996-97 planned activities.

Key:
1- Cochise STW Partnership
2- Coconino County STW Partnership
3- Eastern Arizona STW Partnership (Gila, Graham & Greenlee Counties)
4- Phoenix STW Initiative (Central Maricopa County)
5- East Valley STW Initiative (Eastern Maricopa County)
6- Northeast Valley STW Partnership (Northeastern Maricopa County)
7- Western Maricopa Consortium (Western Maricopa County)
8- Mohave Workforce Development Partnership (Mohave County)
9- Northland STW Opportunities System (Apache & Navajo Counties, off the Navajo and Hopi Reservations)
10- Pima & Santa Cruz Counties STW Partnership
11- Pinal County STW System
12- Yavapai County STW Project
13- Yuma/La Paz STW Partnership

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☆ **Project High Yield** is a Pima & Santa Cruz partnership program in which high risk, low-income students aged 14-18 receive paid summer jobs within the school system.

☆ **"Keys To Excellence"** is a juvenile corrections workforce readiness training program being replicated in Northeastern Maricopa County.

New System Elements

Many of the partnerships are building upon already-established programs. Some, however, are utilizing new ways to contact unemployed, underemployed, and undereducated youth. Almost one-third of the partnerships (Cochise, Eastern Maricopa, Mohave, and Western Maricopa) have established or are establishing career and community resource centers with centralized career information.

Other partnerships (Coconino, Eastern Maricopa, Northeastern Maricopa, and Pima & Santa Cruz) have created teams or task forces to tackle the problem of how to best incorporate out-of-school youth into School To Work. Still others are piloting programs specifically aimed at this target population (Eastern Maricopa and Mohave partnerships).

Although these are the most common new system elements proposed, other new methods of reaching out-of-school youth include:

- career information kiosks
- communications networks
- electronic bulletin board(s)
- central job registries
- training program directories
- radio spots, posters, and newspaper ads specifically targeting out-of-school youth
- industry-specific workshops.

Summary

To ensure full participation by out-of-school youth, School To Work partnerships face several challenges. Obtaining "buy-in" from this population and their service providers is not always easy. Partnerships have formed teams and task forces to determine "how" this can be accomplished. Shared resources and joint alternative/traditional school activities are also used to create active partners.

By far, the major challenge faced in incorporating out-of-school youth into School To Work partnerships is "getting the word out" to this difficult-to-access population. Aggressive recruiting of new partners, targeted marketing strategies (e.g., radio and television spots), pilot programs, and expansion of programs found to be successful in "reaching" out-of-school youth are among the strategies employed. Providing easily-accessible, centralized School To Work information (e.g., career centers, kiosks, job registries and directories, workshops) is another method used. Electronic bulletin boards and communications networks use high technology to access youth from large, isolated geographic regions.

As one partnership noted, "All our programs are targeted towards out-of-school youth." While this is a goal to be realized, in the interim, Arizona's STW partnerships are continuing to build upon programs currently in place and to try new methods to help out-of-school youth successfully transition from school to careers.

Arizona's SCHOOLTOWORK SYSTEM

For additional information about Arizona's School To Work initiative, contact:

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